danger which is in it. For when God ſhakes a Kingdome with ſtrong and healthfull commotions to a generall reforming, 'tis not untrue that many ſectaries and falſe teachers are then buſieſt in ſeducing; but yet more true it is, that God then raiſes to his own work men of rare abilities, and more then common induſtry not only to look back and reviſe what hath bin taught heretofore, but to gain furder and goe on, ſome new enlightn'd ſteps in the diſcovery of truth. For ſuch is the order of Gods enlightning his Church, to diſpenſe and deal out by degrees his beam, ſo as our earthly eyes may beſt ſuſtain it. Neither is God appointed and confin'd, where and out of what place theſe his choſen ſhall be firſt heard to ſpeak; for he ſees not as man ſees, chooſes not as man chooſes, leſt we ſhould devote our ſelves again to ſet places, and aſſemblies, and outward callings of men; planting our faith one while in the old Convocation houſe, and another while in the Chappell at Weſtminſter; when all the faith and religion that ſhall be there canoniz'd, is not ſufficient without plain convincement, and the charity of patient inſtruction to ſupple the leaſt bruiſe of conſcience, to edifie the meaneſt Chriſtian, who deſires to walk in the Spirit, and not in the letter of human truſt, for all the number of voices that can be there made; no though *Harry* the 7. himſelf there, with all his leige tombs about him, ſhould lend them voices from the dead, to ſwell their number. And if the men be erroneous who appear to be the leading ſchiſmaticks, what witholds us but our ſloth, our ſelf-will, and diſtruſt in the right cauſe, that we doe not give them gentle meetings and gentle diſmiſſions, that we debate not and examin the matter throughly with liberall and frequent audience; if not for their ſakes, yet for our own? ſeeing no man who hath taſted learning, but will confeſſe the many waies of profiting by thoſe who not contented with ſtale receits are able to manage, and ſet forth new poſitions to the world. And were they but as the duſt and cinders of our feet, ſo long as in that notion they may yet ſerve to poliſh and brighten the armoury of Truth, ev'n for that reſpect they were not utterly to be caſt away. But if they be of thoſe whom God hath fitted for the ſpeciall uſe of theſe times with eminent and ample gifts, and thoſe perhaps neither among the Prieſts, nor among the Phariſees, and we in the haſt of a precipitant zeal ſhall make no diſtinction, but reſolve to ſtop their mouths, becauſe we fear they come

come with new and dangerous opinions, as we commonly forejudge them ere we underſtand them, no leſſe then woe to us, while thinking thus to defend the Goſpel, we are found the perſecutors.

There have bin not a few ſince the beginning of this Parlament, both of the Presbytery and others who by their unlicen't books to the contempt of an *Imprimatur* firſt broke that triple ice clung about our hearts, and taught the people to ſee day: I hope that none of thoſe were the perſwaders to renew upon us this bondage which they themſelves have wrought, ſo much good by contemning. But if neither the check that *Moſes* gave to young *Joſhua*, nor the countermand which our Saviour gave to young *John*, who was ſo ready to prohibit thoſe whom he thought unlicenc't, be not anough to admoniſh our Elders how unacceptable to God their teſty mood of prohibiting is, if neither their own remembrance what evill hath abounded in the Church by this lett of licencing, and what good they themſelves have begun by tranſgreſſing it, be not anough, but that they will perſwade, and execute the moſt *Dominican* part of the Inquiſition over us, and are already with one foot in the ſtirrup ſo active at ſuppreſſing, it would be no unequall diſtribution in the firſt place to ſuppreſſe the ſuppreſſors themſelves; whom the change of their condition hath puft up, more then their late experience of harder times hath made wiſe.

And as for regulating the Preſſe, let no man think to have the honour of adviſing ye better then your ſelves have done in that Order publiſht next before this, that no book be Printed, unleſſe the Printers and the Authors name, or at leaſt the Printers be regiſter'd. Thoſe which otherwiſe come forth, if they be found miſchievous and libellous, the fire and the executioner will be the timelieſt and the moſt effectuall remedy, that mans prevention can uſe. For this *authentic* Spaniſh policy of licencing books, if I have ſaid ought, will prove the moſt unlicenc't book it ſelf within a ſhort while; and was the immediat image of a Star-chamber decree to that purpoſe made in thoſe very times when that Court did the reſt of thoſe her pious works, for which ſhe is now fall'n from the Starres with *Lucifer*. Whereby ye may gueſſe what kinde of State prudence, what love of the people, what care of Religion, or good manners there was at the contriving, although with ſingular hypocriſie it pretended to bind books to their good behaviour.

JOHN MILTON *Areopagitica* LONDON, 1644 BRIDWELL LIBRARY Octavo